



National Park Service – Fire Education, Prevention and Information Communication & Education - Year One Evaluation

Name:
Position:
National Park Service Site / Region:

I am a supervisor in:
☐ Fire
☐ Interpretation

1. What type of guidance have you provided for the Fire Education Program or Fire Education Prevention and Information Specialist position?

As XXX supervisor, I provide her guidance in a general sense of where I think the program should go and who her key contacts are. I try to keep her informed of the latest information that I receive. Her emphasis is working with the XXX and XXX on prevention/education as well as getting information about fire and ecosystems into the school system.

I feel I have given guidance and direction in training and program management. Having a new program with no real guidance from the National Office as to what are the objectives of the position along with having a program that doubled in the past year was difficult. I'm not sure I want specific direction from the National Office – only some guidance or expectations of the position. Park programs need the flexibility to meet their own needs and send the position down that path.

Finding a direction in and among data calls, acres accomplishments, fire season was difficult this first year, at times we steered the boat at times the season steered us.

Our focus was on getting the word out and selling our programs during prescribed burning and mechanical treatment along with the restrictions during severity.

We are still working on interagency level and trying to find the balance of the NPS mission with the BLM and USFS.

Talk with X on almost a daily basis. Provide programmatic direction through setting of goals and objectives with significant input from employee. Operational guidance is usually requested of me as task accomplishment occurs. Fairly self-directed employee.

As a second level supervisor (direct supervision comes from the parks' PIO), I provide mostly conceptual oversight and review. XXX and I have talked often and in depth about what we are trying to achieve and how we might best go about getting there. We have explored strategies for getting our message to the local communities and for getting the fire and PIO/Interp to work together effectively. We have spent considerable time talking about how all this fits into the larger mission of these parks and the agency. I have left the more direct forms of guidance to her immediate supervisor.

Direct supervision. I directly supervise the Fire Ed Prevention and Info position. Management had decided this would be best suited under Interpretation before the position was hired. I sit with the employee and develop an annual workplan for projects.

Provided general overview of expectations and objectives. Review of products and discussion of ideas and concepts. Provided opportunity to incorporate FEPI comments into regional wildland fire operations guide and strategic plan. Create atmosphere for FEPI Specialist to be creative and explore opportunities and activities that may not have been traditionally used. Be supportive of ideas and efforts to meet regional and park specific needs.

I have provided a wide range of guidance for the position related to internal and external communications.

2. What are the fire communication/education program goals for your area/site?

Specific goals have not been established to date. We have task lists that target specific areas as mentioned above. This has been something discussed in the past but not specifically written down.

The first year we had many goals/tasks that needed to get done to get to build our resources library so we could easily get hands on information. I think the park has expectations that this position would be able to support the general PIO type of position. The season was too demanding on the fire side and we did not support them as much.

We were very over zealous with our list of goals and tasks.

Communication: reach all target audiences prior to issues occurring. Fairly locally driven. Education: encompasses broader perspective. Addresses training and education of interpretive staff to meet fire management education/communication goals, outreach through unique ventures driven by employee (teacher training, kids newspaper, adult newspaper, cooperative education via local school districts/dept of education ventures, etc.).

Fundamentally, the goal of fire education at XXX is building public awareness of, and support for, the Service's fire management plan. Everything else (and there is much detail here also) is subordinate. To do this, of course, we must do a great deal of work making clear the Service's mission, because NPS fire management only makes sense in this context.

Under each of the following broad goals are specific work projects in parenthesis:
 Communications (press releases, publications on Fire for PWR and WUI/Fire Safety, provide fire info to public on prescribed fires, and present and attend at workshops and meetings);
 Education (design and facilitate curriculum-based materials, *Project Learning Tree* workshop, and developments of web pages); Community Outreach (development of mailing lists both for conventional mail and email, and SCA Fire Education Corps); and Interdisciplinary Teamwork (finalize XXX Fire Education Strategy, and alignment of Fire Ed Plan and CIP); and Budget Tracking.

- A.) Inform and educate NPS managers and employees about the regional, area, and park wildland fire management program and how the program complements/supplements other NPS programs;
- B.) Represent wildland fire management and participate in XX NPS educational outreach efforts;

- C.) Represent NPS and participate in interagency educational (fire) and incident management support;
- D.) Develop a variety of products, including multi-media ones to assist with communication about NPS wildland fire program;
- E.) Represent XXX Region in NPS national workshops, projects, budget development.

The primary goal is to increase constituent awareness of forest ecology, fuels management, and community protection, as well as wildland and prescribed fire management activities.

3. How are you evaluating the Fire Education / Communication program?

Evaluations are completed through XXX's PIP as well as the success of our interagency program. The interagency group continues to discuss ways to improve communications within our organization as well as to schools and the public.

We don't have a formal evaluation to see how we succeed with the public or canvassing the staff to see if they were informed, getting feed back from public. We would love ideas on how to measure a successful program.

We had planned an internal review to discuss the year that was postponed. It will be rescheduled.

Day to day supervision is via interpretation division. Coordination with FMO occurs almost daily. Issues/concerns are brought to the attention of the employee first, supervisor second.

My evaluation of XXX's fire education program has been largely subjective. I monitor public opinion and support (newspapers, electronic media, community meetings, visitor attitudes, etc.). I also carefully watch other park staff with some care, trying to judge how well they understand and support the program. These broad patterns give me feedback information on how we are achieving our fundamental goals.

Evaluations are based on workplans set out at the beginning of the fiscal year with employee and based on striving to achieve those goals.

- A.) Level and quality of communication with RFMO;
 - B.) Involvement with and comments from Area FMO and wildland fire management personnel;
 - C.) Participation in NPS/interagency education/prevention activities and comments from NPS and interagency partners;
 - D.) Quality and accuracy of products produced;
 - E.) Ingenuity and creative in program development.
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Measuring the success of the program is subjective and therefore no formal quantitative form of measurement is being used. Simply increasing the exposure of the program, both to internal and external audiences, is a major step forward. And we are now working closer with our sister agencies in this effort.

4. Where do you think your site's program and the national program need to go? Please explain.

I think our program needs to continue to work with home owners to ensure they are doing their part in protecting their property prior to a fire start. The other side of the program that is key is getting information to children about fire and the ecosystems in which they live. We have recently added a component to XXXs job duties which has included assistance with recruitment which is also an important part of our program with less and less applications being received.

I think the park's program needs to continue to work on education of the public/ neighbors in what we do and why so they can feel ownership. Continued to work with the Interagency group in collaborative outreach/education to make fire educated communities – so they become fire proof communities.

More work internally to the park staff on what we do with fire. Take the data and information from the fire effects program and educated park staff.

Feel like the local program has reached a point of maturity. We're fairly self sufficient. Need to concentrate on bridge building with other agencies at the local level (employee is participant on local fire safe council). National program direction should include role of information/education in fire management plan and fire management planning process.

I am enormously pleased by what the XXX fire education program has achieved. As you know, XXX has set the model nationally for fire education, and continues to do so. XX has demonstrated that powerful informational synergy can come from using fire education specialists as a means of connecting the world of fire management with the world of interpretation and education as practiced in parks. The weakness here, nationally speaking, is that many park units with fire education staff still reject this model and attempt to use their fire education staff as just the newest form of incident-type FIOs.

Our Fire Management Plan will be out for review soon. Fire education will stem from our fire management plan.

Site program needs to solidify the good start that has been made in the internal messaging and education system, clarify what products, timetable and effort apply to the messaging/education system. Develop procedure/process for responding to information needs by NPS personnel and local communities when wildland fire occur or affect the area. Develop programmatic response to communicate with and assist communities adjacent to NPS units with implementing FIREWISE concepts and hazard fuel efforts/projects.

National Program:

Develop of national program priorities through input of regions/parks and communication of these priorities and implementation plan to parks/regions. Park fire personnel have expressed concern that they do not know where the national program is headed or exactly what makes up the national program. Several ideas were presented in the first and second national program review unfortunately it appears that no action will be taken on the second report until the vice Gail position is filled. Some ideas are straight forward and could be implemented or at least modified through input of regional/park FEPI Spec's. and FMPC FEPI staffs.

I believe the program is "on-track" (headed in the right direction), but as is with so many other initiatives, there is not enough funding to really do the job correctly.

5. What were the most notable successes that the program accomplished at your site that others may learn from? Please explain.

A huge success this year was our roadside education during prescribed fires. XXX worked hard at ensuring we had several people (some interagency) available to talk to visitors. In the past we have known that this was important but flat ran out of time to do it. Most of our prescribed fires are highly visible. XX also talked to the grade school prior to our burning near their school which was a great success. Another huge success has been XXX's ability to get in to the school system. XX has presented information to various school groups and also provided courses for teachers to attend (Project Learning Tree) which they can then take back to their classes. Again, this is very important to get in to the school systems.

The Zone committee – getting organized working with the public and in an interagency forum.

Documentation of success stories – part of building the in house resource library to show what we are doing.

Displaying our products at an all employee meeting – showed what professional products we could produce as well as highlighted our program.

Take your pick: smoke management information process, newspapers, involvement of position in fire management planning process.

XXX has accomplished so much that it is not easy to put it into a short paragraph. XX accomplishments range from professional quality publications for public distribution, to community outreach, to staff training, to inter-division liaison work. The key here is that XX has envisioned all this into a single, unified pattern of work all supporting one big goal.

Communications with surrounding community groups on prescribed burns; newspaper insert with *XXX Journal* and it had a great collaboration with numerous other fire agencies and private businesses; *Project Learning Tree* workshop; *Fire & Fuels* publication covering projects for XXX and XXX highlighting projects from 2 park units.

Through XXX's efforts firewise and fire program displays in XXX, one to be displayed in XXX, development of messaging and education system to parks/region; XXX Visitor Center exhibit and apparent inclusion of wildland fire in upcoming 15 minute film for V.C. ; smoke management article in XXX, and incident management support in XXX.

Finally having a position that is dedicated to communication/education is a major and significant step forward. Due to other priorities and demands other park/regional fire staff

cannot dedicate the time needed to significantly move the communication/education program forward.

I believe our best success story is in building the intergovernmental relationships along the XXX.

6. What were some of the most difficult challenges the program faced and how were they overcome? Please explain.

XXX may be able to answer this one better. I would say one of the most difficult challenges sometimes is how to go about getting the information out there. There are so many avenues to pursue but how do you keep up on them all. Also internally, educating our own park on what is happening yet not stepping on anyone's toes within the chain of command or other divisions such as interpretation/public affairs. Trying to keep everyone in the know.

Too many demands to be on committees – Need time to build up programs in park and in satellite parks. This is where we could use some guidance – what committee and taskgroups are doing work towards interagency standards vs. reinventing wheels at local level. How do we balance the NPS role against Smokey.

Standardization – NPS standards for publications – just behind the power curve on training and having to meet standards we knew nothing about. (for us this has been resolved – but very frustrating in the beginning)

Conducted national review of program in 1998/99 which supported need for position. Prior to that review was seasonal position.

We are fortunate in that our challenges come from issues, not organization. The partnership at XXX between Interp and Fire Management remains very strong and is based on mutual respect and trust. This means that our challenges come from issues like smoke in local communities.

With the absence of an FMO for part of the fiscal year, it was challenging to know what funds were truly available for projects. As the FMO came on duty, this corrected itself.

Although fire is a critical component in most park ecosystems, large fire years occur sporadically and most park managers and staff have not experienced a year with a large number of fires and acres burned; nor do they have the background knowledge on the importance of fire as an ecological process. This includes resource management personnel. Also the separate funding source for fire has isolated it from resource management/inventory & monitoring and other park programs. Fire is viewed as cash cow therefore other programs do not request, fund nor include fire projects in budget development and allocation. Perspective that someone else – fire department (State, XXX) is taking care of the problem since NPS does not have large fire staffs.

To establish communication with interpretation and education programs at park and regional level;
and the support for XX by area and regional wildland fire management staff

7. What issues were not resolved to your satisfaction and need further review? What is your recommendation for resolution?

There are none I can think of. We need more time to get all of the things done, continued support through the SCA program will help with this also. I hope this is a program that will continue to be supported nationally as it has assisted our interagency program tremendously and is the only way we will get the message out there.

What is expectation of min. qualification for this position? Is there an expectation that they will be on Teams?

What is liability of fire educators in firewise when a house burns up?

Here at XXX we're on track and pleased with where we are going. We have much to do, but feel confident that we can continue to work successfully to address the necessary public issues.

A.) Quality and message of national products; and distribution/quantity provided comments. Difficult to make one product that fits all. Recommendation: Poll or screen regional/park FEPI Spec. to determine message(s) and appropriate distribution/quantity. If not appropriate for park/area/region do not send. Product such as bookmark - not clear what message was intended or implied. For example an adobe building does not communicate structure protection. Was the bookmark meant to advertise the web page or communicate something about the fire program?

B.) Develop procedure/process for submission of FEPI materials to FMPC, editing by FMPC staff and review opportunity before printed/published to ensure that intended message is properly communicated.

C.) How priorities of National FEPI program are determined?

I do not have any unresolved issues at this time, other than lack of funding and office space for other elements (e.g. SCA Fire Info Corps).

Minor points –

The title of this survey, “Lessons Learned” was confusing and misleading, several individuals set this aside because they thought it pertained to the NARTC Lessons Learned Program.

If this survey is important, more than one week should be provided for response. This elicited negative comments again from several wildland fire management personnel. If the intent was to have the results available before a specific meeting, appropriate lead time should be planned. Since a thoughtful response takes some time by park/regional staffs perhaps this information request should have come out under Sue Vap’s signature.

Misc. thoughts and concerns:

The new Acronym (FEPIS) for the Information and Education group is not one that simplifies what the group stands for. Was it intended for the public? Or just internal?